

Using PALS: the online agronomic sample-submission & report-search utility

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1. Preferred Internet Browser

For optimal performance, use Internet Explorer (IE) as your browser. Depending on the version you have, you may need to select “Compatibility View” (see the IE Tools menu). The search utility does not function well in the Mozilla Firefox browser. It may work in Google Chrome.

2. Report Search by Name

Enter your last name or business name (as you listed it on your sample information form) in the box under the “Report Quick Search” tab on the PALS homepage. As you enter letters of a name, a list will display of all names corresponding to your entry. Last name should be used for individuals. Scroll through the list and make your selection, then click the “Search” button.

Note: In some cases, there may be duplicate entries for a person or business. This may occur if someone has had an address change or if variations in the name have appeared on sample information forms. In such cases, you may need to search several entries to find the reports you are seeking.

If a client has several accounts in PALS and wants them merged into one account, this can be accomplished by formal request via the “Contact Us” link located under the Help menu in PALS. Please specify in detail which accounts need to be merged. For example, [please merge James Taylor \(402 W. Washington St., Raleigh, NC 27615\) with James R. Taylor \(402 W. Washington St., Raleigh, NC 27615\).](#)

3. Report Search by Number

This is a new feature, and we have tried to make it foolproof. As you may notice, as of July 2012, all report numbers have a similar format. Each “number” begins with a fiscal year designation, and after a dash, there is a letter code indicating the appropriate lab section followed by a six-digit number. For example, FY13-SL000043 indicates soil report #43 for fiscal year 2013.

Even though some reports prior to fiscal year 2013 were not numbered this way, you can still find them with our new search function. Here are some examples that show how report-number searches work.

- a) If you enter only numbers (for example, 247), then the utility will, by default, look for a soil report numbered “SL000247.” Since no fiscal year was specified, the search utility may show you as many as three soil reports: FY13-SL000247, FY12-SL000247 and FY11-SL000247. To select the right one, you must know which fiscal year you are looking for (current year or one of the two previous fiscal years). The other reports listed will most likely belong to other clients. A fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30; reports found under FY13 were analyzed during the time period of July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2013.
- b) If you are not looking for a soil report, then be sure to enter the letter designation for the lab section along with the report number: for example, “N” for nematode, “P” for plant, “W” for waste, “S” for solution and “M” for soilless media. You do not have to enter all the leading zeros. An entry of ‘N592’ could locate the following nematode reports: FY13-N000592, FY12-N000592 and FY11-N000592.

- c) If you enter the entire report number as currently displayed on our new reports, 'FY13-SL000233' for example, then the utility will find only that specific report.
- d) The one quirk in the report-number search utility occurs for soilless media reports. In FY2011, media reports were still issued as solution reports with a special report number beginning with "S9." The new report search utility will not recognize any report numbers with the "S9" designation. When searching for media reports from FY2011, substitute "M" for the "S9" prefix.

4. View Report

Agronomic reports are available for viewing and/or saving as PDF files. Adobe Reader must be installed on your computer. When you click the "View Report" link, you have the option to view the report immediately, print it or save it to your computer for later use. The new homeowner report (PDF file) does not contain all of the soil test data found on standard agricultural soil reports; for example, Ca% is not listed. However, if homeowner report data are downloaded (CSV file), as discussed below in section 5. **Download Data**, then all data can be seen.

Users are encouraged to save all their reports and/or data files to their own computer since reports are available on PALS for a limited period of time (a little over two years).

5. Download Data

Report data can be downloaded in CSV (comma-separated value) or XML format. When you select report(s) for download, you will be asked to open or save the file. To preserve desired formatting, always choose the "save" option first. After the file is saved to your computer, then you can open it with the software of your choice (e.g., Notepad, Wordpad, Excel).

CSV Format (for use with N.C. Nutrient Management Software (nutrients.soil.ncsu.edu/nmp/index.htm)).

If you click the "Download Data" link located on the same line as the desired report, you will be **downloading data for that one report only**, and you will have two download options: "Use standard template" (default) or "Customize output." If you use the default, then all data will be downloaded in a form compatible with N.C. Nutrient Management Software. If you choose to customize the download, then you will have the option of deselecting any items that you do not want to include. When prompted, "save" the file.

If you want to **download data from several reports into a single file**, the procedure is slightly different. When you choose multiple reports, all data are downloaded in standard format; you do not have the opportunity to select or deselect specific items. When you look at the list of your reports in PALS, you can check the "Select All" checkbox (upper right corner of the list), or you can check several individual reports by selecting the checkboxes associated with those particular reports. Once you have made your selections, choose the "Download CSV" option located at the top of the checkbox column. When prompted, "save" the file.

Excel Spreadsheet.

In general, follow the directions above. If you have Excel installed on your computer, then you can use it to open downloaded CSV files in spreadsheet format. Having opened a file in Excel, then you can save it as an Excel (XLS or XLSX) file, if you wish.

XML File.

This option is preferred by some users of GPS technology. It is only available if you do a Name search (as opposed to a Report Number search). Select the checkbox (far right column) associated with each report for which data are desired. Then click the "Download XML" link at the top of the column. The file you create will include all data for the indicated reports. You do not have the option to pick and choose fields when downloading into an XML file. The data will display in your Internet browser. You can copy and save it as best suits your needs.

6. Sample Processing Time

Expected turnaround times for agronomic samples are displayed on the PALS home page.

7. Submit Soil Sample Information & Payment Online

At the present time, this feature is available for soil samples only. It will be available for other agronomic samples in the near future. To use this option, find the "Utilities" drop-down menu at the top of any PALS page. Select "Submit Samples Online" from the drop-down list. If you are not already logged in, then you will be prompted to do so. If you have not created a login and password, then follow the instructions in section **9. Login & Password**.

Note: Only soil samples collected in North Carolina can be analyzed by the NCDA&CS Agronomic Division. Sample information entered online will be automatically sent to the Division, but you will still need to print the sample information form after completion and send a copy along with your samples. You can pay for your samples online with Visa or MasterCard.

8. Change Crop Code (special new feature for Soil Reports only)

This feature is primarily for farmers and commercial growers who change their crop selection plans after receiving soil report recommendations for another crop. It enables them to pull up the report for the sample in question, enter a new crop code, and receive revised lime and fertilizer recommendations suitable for the new selection.

To use this option, find the "Utilities" drop-down menu at the top of any PALS page. Select "Change Crops on My Report" from the drop-down list. Select the desired fiscal year. Enter the appropriate soil report number. Click the "Search" button.

If the report has multiple samples, click on the one that you want to change. It will be highlighted. Then, click on the arrow in the "Select First Crop" box to display a list of all possible crops. Select the one you have decided to grow. Next, choose a crop from "Select Second Crop" box. If you do not want to specify a second crop, make sure that this selection box is either empty or says "No Crop." Then click the "Change Selected Sample" button. You will be given revised lime and fertilizer recommendations, but you will not be able to print a revised report. Your original report will remain in our system with the original crop specifications. You can, however, download the revised recommendations in Excel spreadsheet form. For more detailed instructions, [click here](#).

9. Login & Password

Logging in with a password is necessary only if you want to edit/update your customer information or submit information for a new set of soil samples and & pay for them online.

To create an account and set up a password, this is what you need to do.

1. Click on the "Login" hyperlink in the upper right corner.
2. Click on the "Don't have an account? Create one!" hyperlink.
3. Enter your e-mail address. Choose and confirm a password as indicated.

4. Once your account is created, follow the instructions provided to verify your e-mail address.
5. If the e-mail address you provided is not currently in the Agronomic Division's database, then you will be prompted to provide your customer information (name, address, phone, etc.).
6. If you select the "Do not notify me when my reports are ready" checkbox, then you will not receive any notification e-mails when your reports are available. You will have to check online periodically to see if reports are ready.

10. Bar-code Shipping Labels for Sample Tracking

This option is still available from the Agronomic Division home page www.ncagr.gov/agronomi.